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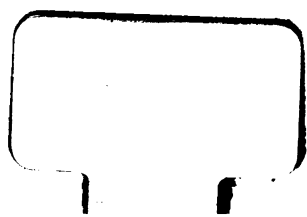
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THE LAW WAS OUR SCHOOLMASTER
TO BRING US TO CHRIST.

A PRIZE ESSAY,

TO WHICH DR. ELLERTON'S THEOLOGICAL PRIZE WAS AWARDED, JUNE, 1845.

BY

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ARGUMENT.

PREPARATION of the Law for the Gospel, historical and moral—moral preparation the subject of the present inquiry—remarks on this moral preparation—manner in which it was effected.

The Law prepared for the Gospel by tending to suppress idolatry—by giving a right knowledge of the Deity—results of this knowledge—preparatory effect of the Moral Law—of the Ceremonial Law—of the intimations of the Messiah.

General effect of the Law in tendency—actual effects—some considerations suggested—conclusion.

THE LAW WAS OUR SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US TO CHRIST.

"So Law appears imperfect ; and but given
With purpose to resign them, at full time,
Up to a better covenant ; disciplined
From shadowy types to truth."

Milton's Paradise Lost, Book xii. l. 300.

THE various Dispensations of Religion are connected and successive parts of one great scheme of Revelation. Each Dispensation prepares for that which succeeds it, and has thus a prospective purpose, as well as a present use. A present use, for to those under its economy it is a means of instruction and discipline adapted to their characters and circumstances, and to the existing condition of the world. And a prospective purpose, as it serves to introduce the next stage in the progress of Divine communications. Thus the Law of Moses was the religion of the Jews, and promoted certain purposes as an existing establishment. It was also at the same time effecting an ulterior object, and preparing for the promulgation and reception of the Christian Dispensation. The Law was introductory to the Gospel, both by causing a certain disposition of events in general, and of the condition and circumstances of the Jews ; and also by exerting a discipline on their minds and characters. The one was a kind of external and historical introduction : the other a moral and practical preparation. The one includes all that combination of circumstances produced by the Law which facilitated the progress of Christianity : the other all those effects of the Law on the minds of those under its discipline which tended to prepare

for the reception of the Gospel. Now it is the latter of these two methods of preparation which appears to be intended by St. Paul in his argument to the Galatians. For after having proved the insufficiency of the Law for justification, he proceeds to declare its real use and purpose. He states ^a“that the Law was added because of transgressions;” ^b“that we were kept under the Law shut up unto the faith;” and that “the Law was our school-master to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” These expressions evidently indicate the manner in which the Law prepared for Christianity by the instruction and discipline it afforded to those under its economy. This moral preparatory effect will therefore be the subject of the present inquiry.

The Law is represented by St. Paul as a system of education and discipline. The Jewish nation is described by the figure of a ^dminor, under tutors and governors till the time of his inheritance, and of a child gradually prepared for a maturer stage of existence. Like the education of a child, the legal dispensation was progressive, preparatory, almost unperceived by those under its economy, and departed after it had fulfilled its preliminary purpose. Thus is presented to the mind the beautiful and wonderful spectacle of a whole nation, counting its time by centuries, under a course of discipline for a more complete revelation. There is, however, a considerable difference between the instruction of an individual and of a community. For the individual usually derives the whole benefit from his education, but in a community only later generations reap the full result of the discipline of the past. But it must be

^a Gal. iii. 19.

^b Ibid. iii. 23.

^c Ibid. iii. 24.

^d Ibid. iv. 1, 2.

observed, that all the Jews, at every period of the national existence, were put in a state of instruction and discipline, perhaps the best adapted to their dispositions and to existing circumstances. This general notion of preparation is also in strict accordance with reason and with the analogy of civilization. For supposing, as was the case, that the whole of religious truth was not to be communicated to all at once, it seems most reasonable that men should be gradually prepared for the reception of the successive developments of revelation. And this preparation, effected by the special appointment of God, is in strict accordance with what appears to take place under His general providence. For in the world, by a kind of education, whole nations and races appear to be prepared for certain purposes of which they would have been otherwise incapable.

The distinctive preparatory purpose of the Law is somewhat different from the general object of education. The Law is compared not so much to the schoolmaster as to the attendant* and guardian of the pupil, who conducted him to school. For the Law, in its introductory character, did not of itself, like education in general, impart a complete course of instruction; but was a preliminary to the full and perfect education of the New Dispensation. The Law did not so much teach the Jews as make them teachable; was not their instructor, but their guide and conductor to Christ, their Divine Master. The Law was introductory to the Gospel by convincing man of sin; and thus leading him to Christ to be justified by faith. This is the epitome of the whole preparation; but it may be necessary to state the introductory effects of the Law more

* Παιδαγωγός. Gal. iii. 24.

particularly. The Christian Dispensation was to be a revelation of the reconciliation of God to man through the merits of Christ. The knowledge of the nature of God, and of the condition of man, and some intimation of the means of reconciliation, would therefore be an important preliminary to such a dispensation. Now the Law, by its whole instruction and discipline, was calculated to inculcate as practical principles these preparatory truths. As a necessary requisite to such a teaching, it tended to suppress idolatry. It then taught the true character of God, and the sinfulness and corrupt nature of fallen man. It also intimated the necessity of atonement; foretold and prefigured that atonement and its nature; and impressed on the mind other notions preliminary to Christianity. It will be, therefore, our present purpose to consider these and other preparatory effects, as well as the manner in which the Law tended to produce them. It will then be necessary, briefly, to view the combined result of the whole as introductory to Christianity. It may here be remarked, that the tendency of the Law, rather than its actual effect, is the subject of the present inquiry. For the Law must not be estimated by the actual condition of the Jewish nation: the one is the purpose of God, the other the conduct of man. What is considered is, also, not the effect of the Law singly, but of the Law considered as part of the Old Dispensation; for the other revelations of the Old Testament were delivered contemporaneously with the working of the Law, as an existing and effective establishment.

The first point of consideration, is the manner in which the Law prepared for the Gospel by its strong tendency to prevent idolatry, and its consequent corruptions. That the suppression of idolatry was one of the main purposes of

the Law appears, not only from its general spirit, but also from express declarations. In doing this the Law fulfilled one of the principal objects of a preliminary instructor, which is to keep the pupil free from vicious practices, and secure from the influence of evil example. To suppress idolatry, it was necessary to eradicate principles and habits which had gradually arisen in Egypt, and which had strongly impressed themselves on the national mind. It was also necessary to guard the Israelites against the contagious influence of the surrounding nations of Canaan. The people themselves were highly susceptible of external impressions; and all the world around them was, more or less, involved in the darkness of heathen superstition. The Patriarchal Dispensation had lost much of its influence, and had become almost ineffective. The Israelites were no more a family, but a nation; and there was a strong bias among them to a similar state of idolatry to that which prevailed in the rest of the world. This is instanced by their constant degeneracy whenever removed from the control of external laws, as might be shewn by many instances—particularly by the different religious conditions of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The Law was eminently suited to the disposition and circumstances of the Israelites at the time of its delivery. It had a strong tendency to suppress idolatry, by effecting a great change in the external relations of the nation, in their internal condition, in their practical principles, and in their actual practice. In their external relations; for, by prohibitions, and the establishment of different customs, and by the general spirit of the whole polity, it separated the Jews from all the nations of the earth. In their internal con-

dition ; for the extinction of idolatrous habits, and of all inducements, and approaches to them, is an object which pervades the whole law of the Jews, and seems to be the sole reason of some of its special enactments. The Law, by its whole teaching, and the Prophets by their subsequent comments and addresses, exposed the emptiness and wickedness of idol worship. But the Law did not teach merely ; but enforced and exemplified its teaching in actual practice. The whole ritual, and several enjoined practices, were reflections of verbal doctrine, and tended to wean the mind from idolatry, and to make it regard with indifference or aversion, the most sacred customs and observances of the heathen. Of this kind was the particular selection for sacrifice^f of animals deemed most sacred and inviolable by the Egyptians. Rites and ceremonies were thus preservatives and admonitions of the protests of the Law against idolatry. Under this practical system, in spite of repeated revolts and partial apostacies, the Jews were gradually instructed and disciplined, till idolatry was completely subverted, and became the object of a kind of political hatred. For, whatever may have been the other sins of the Jews after the captivity, there seems to have been no tendency at all among them to revert to the idolatrous defections of their ancestors. The prohibition of idolatry, and the formation of a character opposed to it, were important steps in the preparation for Christianity ; for the doctrines introductory to the Gospel taught by the Law are quite contrary to idolatry, and could not have been inculcated till after its subversion. The extinction of Polytheism, also, destroyed with it many dependent no-

^f Numbers xix. 2.

tions, which were great obstacles to the spread of Christianity. Such, for instance, was the idea of the co-ordinate existence of different Deities and religions, which long opposed the exclusive claims of the New Dispensation.

The Law, while it forbade the worship of false Gods, instructed the Jews in clear and right notions of the Deity. It taught these notions at a time when the knowledge of the Supreme Being was fading away, and his real attributes were scarcely perceptible amid the mass of corruption and Idolatry. It has been truly stated that upon the representations given of the Deity depend the whole character and complexion of a religion. The Law, in the very names in which it announced the Supreme Being, delineated Him as eternal, self-existent, and omnipotent. The Unity of God was proclaimed and enforced in the strongest manner, as the very basis of the Divine Legislation. He was described as the Lord of the whole earth; and as the sole and exclusive object of obedience and worship. His infinite power and wisdom were expressed in terms fully adequate to those inferences of the Creator which may be drawn from the vast subsequent discoveries in physical science and astronomy. His justice, and goodness, and holiness, and other attributes, were directly and indirectly impressed on the mind. To other nations the Deity, so far as He was known, was principally an object of fear. To the Jews He was the object of love; and to love Him with all the heart, and soul, and might, was the ^hfirst and great commandment of the Law. One great effect of the Law was to keep in view the strict personality of the Deity; and the intimate relation subsisting between Him and His

^s Jehovah. "I am that I am." Exodus iii. 14. Elohim; Shaddai.

^h Deut. vi. 4.

rational creatures. In the rest of the world in proportion as the Unity and universal dominion of God became more known, there was greater danger of these ideas being practically lost in the notion of a Mind of the Universe, or of an Intelligence with whom man could hold no communication. But the whole Law, both in its delivery and administration, clearly and prominently shewed the personality of the Deity. The visible token of his presence and glory dwelt among the Jews; and his commandments were issued in some measure like the orders of an earthly sovereign. The personal interposition of Jehovah is a leading feature in the Old Dispensation; and appears so strongly that by some it has been unreasonably thought a ground of objection. Though God of all, He was in an especial manner the tutelary Deity of the Jews; and they were his peculiar worshippers. He was their king, and they were his subjects. The connection between God and His people was depicted in the most striking and touching natural images. It is beautifully represented by the anxious care of an ⁱeagle for her unfledged brood; by the ^kpity of a father for his children; and by the ^llove of a mother for the infant which hangs on her breast. God was declared to be the especial guardian of the widow, the orphan, and the oppressed; and his mercy and longsuffering were made the subjects of a most solemn^m proclamation. These views of the Supreme Being were exhibited and impressed on the mind by the awful solemnity of the promulgation of the Law from Mount Sinai; and by the whole course of the Hebrew Ritual. His Unity was shewn in the existence of one only seat of worship, one temple, one general altar,

ⁱ Deut. xxxii. 11.

^l Isaiah xlix. 15.

^k Psalm ciii. 13.

^m Exodus xxxiv. 6.

and one abiding symbol of his immediate presence. His holiness in the sanctification of his house and altar ; in the consecration of the priests and Levites ; in the care enjoined in the selection of victims, and in the various modes of purification required of his worshippers. His goodness in the offerings of thanksgiving, and in the festivals which were memorials of past mercies. Thus also the other attributes of God were reflected in rites and ceremonies, and so unceasingly forced on the attention as to become practically and habitually known. And the necessary consequence of this practical acquaintance with the relation of God to man, would be a knowledge of all those duties and feelings which naturally result from such a relation. The communication to the Jews of true ideas of the Deity, was an important preliminary to the reception of Christianity. For Christianity is built upon these ideas, and presupposes them. In the rest of the world, as at ⁿAthens and at ^oLystra, right notions of the Deity had to be preached as the first Article of Faith. But to those who had been under the economy of the Law, these notions were already known, and a great practical difficulty was thus removed. Christianity reveals the reconciliation of God to man ; and it was therefore necessary that the character of God should be known, as well as the nature and condition of man. The knowledge of the Deity imparted by the Law also answered another important purpose. For the revelation of the nature and perfections of God was virtually a disclosure of his will, and a standard of obedience. The ^pcommand to be holy, even as God is holy, was the moral result of a knowledge of his nature.

ⁿ Acts xvii. 23.

^o Ibid. xiv. 15.

^p Leviticus xix. 2.

For it immediately became the duty of his rational creatures to act according to the law of his perfections, and to conform themselves, as far as possible, after the image of his unapproachable character. The mind of man is so constituted as to receive its clearest conceptions and deepest impressions from comparison. The perfect standard of God's attributes would stand out in striking contrast to the actual practice of weak and sinful man. Religious endeavour and experience would thus produce a sense of a corrupt nature, of sin, and of an inability to obey God. So ⁹Joshua declared that the Israelites could not serve the Holy God; and so ¹Job humbled himself in dust and ashes before the Almighty, as displayed in his works.

We must now proceed to consider the manner in which the Moral Law prepared for Christianity. The Moral Law of the Old Dispensation was a republication of the law of nature. It was also an exposition of all those duties which are the result of the revealed relation between God and man. It placed before man a standard for the regulation of his conduct, and taught true and pure principles of morality. The knowledge of this morality was an important preliminary to Christianity. For the morality of the Law is taken by our Saviour as the basis of his instructions in the Sermon on the Mount. It was not destroyed by Him, but filled up and perfected, cleared of all misapplication, and carried out to its full and genuine tendencies. It is true that man is a law to himself. In a state of innocence he was both the depository of the law of his being, and was also himself like the other works of his Creator an exemplification of that law. But after the fall

⁹ Joshua xxiv. 19.

¹ Job xlii. 5. 6.

arose a dissension in man's nature, and his actual conduct was perpetually at variance with the rule of conscience. And though man's moral sense may not be altogether effaced from his nature, yet its rule may be more and more corrupted, and its impression become constantly weaker. But the Mosaic Dispensation published a standard of duty external to man himself. It subjected man's corrupt and changeable nature to a pure and unchangeable rule. Thus was the actual condition of human nature placed in strong contraposition to the strict and uncompromising requirements of a written law. The Moral Law also was not a dead letter, or a rule of life which a man might obey, or not as he pleased. It was enforced by all the powers of civil government; and obedience to it was secured by the imposition of temporal rewards and punishments. For the first, and perhaps for the last time in the history of the world, the Church was entirely the State, and the State the Church; and religious and moral offences were punished, (as far as could be done, through the instrumentality of human agency,) as offences against the civil government. Thus the principles of duty were practically impressed on the mind, and all were put into an effective state of moral discipline. Another prominent feature in the Mosaic Dispensation was the fact that it resolved morality into religion. It was a standard grounded on religion, and under it, virtuous conduct became religious obedience. The Law constantly and strikingly indicated the cardinal principle that all duties are ultimately referable to God. No subordinate objects, such as the State, or our fellow-men, were suffered to engross the attention, and to withdraw it from Him who is the great object of all obedience. The precepts of the Law were enjoined as duties to God. All obedience

was an obedience to Him; all offences were offences against Him. The actual working of the Moral Law would eminently tend to prepare for the reception of Christianity. By the law, says the Apostle, was the knowledge of sin. The Law forbade sin, and made it known by the prohibition. No sooner was the Law in operation than transgression began, and brought with it a practical sense of sin as an actual violation of an external command. The Law gave a knowledge of sin in its distinctive character as an offence against God. We are so well acquainted with this notion that we are inclined to overlook what appears to have been its origin. Before the Christian era, this distinctive idea of sin as a violation of the Divine command, seems to have been almost peculiar to the Jewish nation. We do not find in the classical languages any word which exactly expresses this idea. There were indeed words to represent particular crimes against religion, but none which comprehended every offence as an offence against God. But the Hebrew language abounds with words which express this particular idea, and are applicable to the actions of ordinary life. The Law also made punishment the necessary consequence of sin, so that to those under its economy, sin and punishment were almost correlative ideas. The Law gave a personal and a practical sense of sin. Each individual was shewn the nature of sin and his own guilt both by every single transgression, and also by a comparison of his general conduct with the requirements of the Law. The Law opened wounds which might not otherwise have been perceived; and probed, and exposed the corrupt nature of man. Some heathen philosophers supposed that a revelation of God's will was all that was requisite, and that obedience would be a necessary consequence or at least within a man's power.

But the Law taught the human mind that it could not be justified of itself. For it shewed man's weakness to himself, and the insufficiency of the purest knowledge, and the most favourable circumstances. And so beautiful was this discipline, that the most devout, in proportion to their obedience, seem to have been more and more convinced of their inability to satisfy the sanctity of the Law. Examples of this state of feeling may be seen in those penitential psalms which do not appear to allude to any particular or unusual sin. Even the incidental effect of the Law on the mind by which the very prohibition of vice became an incentive to sin, was calculated to give a dreadful sense of the corruption of human nature. This feeling is strikingly described by 'St. Paul, together with the manner in which it brought men to Christ. Thus did the Moral Law both in itself and in its direct and indirect effects on the mind, teach man his real condition, and cause him, as condemned by the Law^t to flee to Him who is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

We now proceed to consider in what way the Ceremonial Law contributed to the preparation for the Gospel. The Ceremonial Law was not so much an actual means of instruction as a reflection and an exhibition of doctrines already taught. The truths of Revelation were constantly recalled to the attention and forcibly and practically impressed on the mind by the varied course and incessant repetition of significant rites and ceremonies. The institution of the Hebrew Ritual must not be regarded as unconnected with the doctrines at the same time delivered, and which give to it a life and a meaning. This concurrent teaching

^a Romans vii. 7.

^t Romans x. 4.

pervades the whole of the Pentateuch, especially the Book of Deuteronomy, and was continued and developed in the subsequent instructions and expositions of the Psalms and Prophets. Viewed in this light, the discipline of the Hebrew Ritual appears to have been eminently calculated to give to those under its economy a practical sense and a constant conviction of those truths of revelation, which would otherwise perhaps have been mere matters of theoretical belief, or even altogether forgotten. The general effect of the Jewish rites and ceremonies was to implant practically in the mind those ideas, and hopes, and fears, which are the germs of Christian feelings and principles. The tendency of the Ritual, as will be shewn by particular instances, was to produce that sense of his own natural condition and that disposition of mind without which man is scarcely able to comprehend, and certainly not inclined to receive and believe, the great Doctrine of the Atonement. The representations given in Scripture of the corruption and sinfulness of human nature were enforced and exemplified by the Jewish Ritual. Day after day, and Sabbath after Sabbath, and on other periodical occasions, were offered sacrifices for the sins of the nation. It was only after care, and preparations, and washings, and other purgations, and, as it were, by being put out of his natural state, that man could approach, as a worshipper, the just and holy God. The very religious services of the Jews had themselves to be cleansed and sanctified by offering and purification. The temple they had built and the altar they had raised, had, on the solemn day of Atonement, to be purified by the sprinkling of blood.^u Their high priest, though consecrated

^u Leviticus, xvi. 16, 19, 24.

and previously purified, had, in the very performance of one of the most solemn acts of religion, to make an offering for himself and for the sins of the people. The sense of personal sin was kept up and brought home to the conscience of each individual, by the long specification of sacrifices assigned to those who had committed any particular offence. The guilt of sin, together with its punishment, were strongly marked in the institution and perpetuation of the rite of sacrifice. The conviction of transgressions was impressed on the mind, and the nature and necessity of repentance were taught and maintained by appointed acknowledgments of sin, especially by the solemn annual confession on the great day of Atonement. The demand of the Law for expiatory sacrifice was incessant and importunate. Sacrifice formed the chief office of the priesthood, and occupied the most prominent place in the Hebrew Ritual. It strongly intimated the necessity of some vicarious expiation, and that not even legal atonement could be made without shedding of blood. And like other parts of the Law it must, by its very inefficiency, have shewn the necessity of some further redemption. For transgression of the ten commandments and other moral offences, no effective atoning sacrifice was provided; for it was impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin. While legal expiations were so strictly exacted, the devout mind must have felt deeply the still stronger necessity of some real and efficacious Atonement. So David, when speaking of a moral offence, exclaims, "Thou desirest no sacrifice else would I give it Thee; but Thou delightest not in burnt offerings." The sense of this inefficiency would naturally

▼ Leviticus, xvi. 21.

* Psalm li. 16.

lead to humility, self-abasement, and repentance, to the broken and contrite heart. Thus would arise in the mind the notions of the need of repentance, and a yearning for some real sacrifice for sin. Rites and ceremonies also tended to produce other practical ideas of great importance in the Christian scheme, but which cannot now be particularly enumerated. Thus the constant demand for ceremonial purification would tend to teach how much more strongly real purity and holiness were required. It is not here contended that rites and ceremonies simply of themselves caused these results, or that their whole effect was produced on their first introduction. What is insisted upon is, that they did tend, when combined with the developed teaching of the rest of Scripture, to produce certain practical notions, though the perception of these notions may, like that teaching, have been gradual and progressive. On the whole then, the Ceremonial Law, both by the knowledge, it imparted, and by shewing its own inefficiency, tended to give those under its economy a present and a practical sense of their own sinfulness and inability, and of the necessity of some great atonement.

But under the Law, man was not brought to a sense of his own forlorn condition and then left to despair. With the growing convictions of guilt and of the necessity of atonement, were gradually revealed the ideas, and hopes, and consolations of Redemption. The various and successive modes in which, under the Old Dispensation, the coming of the Saviour was intimated and implied, can here be only briefly noticed and not fully examined. The Law, at its very promulgation, and subsequently, gave intimation of its own transitory character, and bore the stamp of what it was to fulfil in the

course of religious development. These notices were not of a kind to impair the efficacy of the Law as an institution, but were sufficient to shew its subsidiary and preparatory nature. It was the Law of a great family, founded upon the promises of a blessing to all nations, which promises, from its local and particular character, it was not calculated to fulfil. At its first institution it announced another Prophet, and implicitly another Covenant, which announcements were more fully explained and developed by succeeding prophecy. The express declarations of the prophets gradually unfolded and illustrated the character and office of the Messiah. The direct tendency of these communications was to impress strongly on the mind the notions of deliverance and redemption. Particular notice must also be taken of the probable effect of those passages⁷ of the Old Testament which describe the Saviour as a priest and an expiatory victim. What the Law and Prophets expressed, rites and ceremonies, and other types, implied and prefigured. The exact impression which types ought to have produced upon the Jews is not here insisted upon, nor is it necessary to the present subject to inquire how far some statements of their effects may have been strained and fanciful. All that is stated, and which can scarcely be disputed, is that types, combined with the teaching of the rest of Scripture, must have co-operated in maintaining some strong practical impression of redemption, and so have assisted in preparing for the New Dispensation. And thus as festivals and other ceremonies significantly commemorated the known events of the past, so to those who were entrusted with anticipations of future redemption, in proportion to the degree in which those anticipations

⁷ Isaiah liii ; Daniel ix. 24 ; Psalm cx. 4.

were revealed and understood, would types have a prospective meaning emblematical of the Messiah's character and office. For instance, expiatory sacrifice in general, particularly the offering of the paschal lamb, would tend to give, to those acquainted with the express intimations of Scripture, mystic hints and typical representations of the great atonement. Whatever amount of impression typical figures, whether of things or of persons, were calculated to produce, that impression was most important, as it was a practical memorial from time to time, and in most cases a perpetual memorial of doctrines once revealed. One great object, then, of the instruction and discipline of the Old Dispensation was, to impart to those under its economy the notion of the great atonement. Some general notions of atonement have been traced in the religious customs of all nations, and have been shewn by a great writer^s to be in accordance with the analogy of nature. But the Hebrew Law tended to produce the practical and definite ideas and expectations of the actual doctrine afterwards disclosed. These ideas and expectations may have been at first more general and obscure, as they were anticipations, and not an actual knowledge of the New Dispensation as revealed; but they gradually became clearer and more express, and appear to have been beautifully adapted to each stage in the growth of the national mind. The gradual intimations of redemption were communicated to those who, from the discipline to which they were subject, were led to feel more and more their own sinfulness, and the necessity of some great remedy. But with greater wants came larger promises of grace; and with increasing convictions of sin and of danger, fuller successive

^s Butler's Analogy, part ii. chap. 5.

assurances of atonement and salvation to come. The expectation of the Messiah thus produced was also eminently practical. It made his coming a source of pleasant anticipation, and the object of individual and national desire. With a great deal of perversion and misapprehension, it existed in almost all the Jews so strongly as to become almost a part of their character. But the true tendency of the teaching of the Law can only be seen in those upon whom it seems to have had its genuine effect. It appears conspicuously in those devout persons who at our Saviour's appearance, "waited for redemption in Israel." The inspired addresses which Simeon and Zacharias were authorized to deliver, appear to have quite coincided with their own feelings and anticipations. Such expectations must have prepared those upon whom the Law had its proper effect to receive our Saviour and to hail his coming. And we can scarcely conceive a better preparation for Christ, than a sense of the necessity of his appearance, true general notions of his character and office, and that longing which displayed itself so vividly in Simeon,^a that he was even content to depart in peace after he had seen the Lord's Anointed.

The principal effects of the Law in preparing for the Gospel have now been separately considered ; and it must be admitted, that the combined result of the whole eminently tended to prepare a character and a disposition calculated to receive the Christian Dispensation. We are ourselves, from long acquaintance, so familiarized with the fundamental truths upon which the reception of the Gospel depends, that we regard them almost as natural principles, and are inclined to overlook the necessity of their revelation

^a Luke 11, 29, 30.

and establishment. Yet these truths did not exist at all, or at least did not exist as practical principles in the rest of the world. Among the Jews alone they were inculcated and maintained, principally by the teaching and discipline of the Law. Without the Law, humanly speaking, not a single people would have been exempt from idolatry and its consequent corruptions. Such an exemption was important in itself, and an absolute requisite to the inculcation of doctrines introductory to the Gospel. Christianity revealed the reconciliation of God to man, through the merits of Christ. The Law disclosed the true character of God, the real condition of man, and gave intimations of the atonement. We have seen that the direct teaching of the Law declared the nature of God, and that this knowledge was practically impressed on the mind; for it was not a barren teaching, but was reflected in the whole ritual, and became the ground of obedience. The standard derivable from God's attributes, and the Moral Law, and rites and ceremonies, taught man his own weak and corrupt nature, and convinced him of sin. The ritual inculcated the necessity of atonement—a necessity apparent in the working of the rest of the Law. At the same time, under the legal economy, both expressly and implicitly increasing intimations were successively given of the redemption to be effected by Christ. The whole teaching of the Law was also eminently practical, and made men act as well as believe. It may be difficult to state precisely what parts of the Law produced a given effect. For the same effect is in many cases the result of various laws, and one law often produces many effects. Yet this very difficulty shews how the whole system beautifully combined to cause certain results. Thus did the Law prepare for the Gospel, both by shewing its

necessity and by inculcating beforehand those fundamental facts, upon a knowledge of which its effective reception depends. It may be objected that the simple and single purpose of the Law was to convince man of sin, and thus lead him to the Saviour. Now it is fully admitted that the great object of the Law was to bring men to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. But to teach those notions and doctrines which Christianity presupposes was surely introductory to its reception, and a part of that great purpose. The preliminary instruction of the Law is also alluded to by our Saviour in his conversation^b with Nicodemus, and is insisted on in the subsequent addresses of the Apostles. For aught we know no other dispensation whatever, considering the disposition and circumstances of the Jews, could have been better calculated than the Law to be introductory to Christianity. It would form a beautiful picture to describe the genuine tendency of the Law, as carried into effect by the faith and obedience of a devout people. Such a sketch would better, than any comment or reasoning, impress on the mind the perfection of the Law as a preparatory Dispensation, and the exceeding excellence of the Divine purpose. It is melancholy, on the other hand, to turn from the proper tendency of the Law to its actual effect. It is melancholy to regard the result produced on many of the Jews, through a perversion of its true objects and a misapplication of its real meaning. Yet, though the actual effect of the Law falls far short of its tendency, it may have been greater than is commonly supposed. The Law may not have produced its full effect upon the whole nation at any time, but it appears to have had a preparatory effect on some at all times.

^b St. John, iii. 10.

There are various indications in Scripture of the continuance, at all periods of the Jewish history, of those upon whom the legal economy produced its proper effect. Of this kind are the addresses to such persons, as living at the time, and other almost incidental allusions to their existence. They may have been few, and scattered, and unnoticed by all except by Him who seeth not as man seeth. In the days of Ahab there remained seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and yet of their existence Elijah himself was ignorant. Even so at all times there may have been a remnant of the true and faithful disciples of the Law. And as the Jewish nation was small in number, when compared with the rest of the world, and yet was selected to fulfil a certain purpose, so may this remnant, though few among the thousands of Israel have fulfilled the purpose of God. For they maintained and transmitted as living, and inherent, and realized principles, the expectation of our Saviour's coming, and those fundamental truths, on a practical knowledge of which the reception of His Gospel depends.

We must also not forget those upon whom the Law had only a partial effect. They may not have derived full benefit from its instruction and discipline; they may have been affected in manners and degrees too various to be here mentioned, and perhaps too indefinite to be distinctly specified at all; but that they were more or less prepared for the Gospel cannot be denied.

The Law also produced a necessary effect on the whole nation. By forming a peculiar character, it made the Jews defenders, not of the spirit, yet of the letter of religion, and depositaries of the oracles of God. Their very perversion of the Law, and their consequent national pre-

judices, contributed indirectly, and in a manner they knew not and wished not, to the preparation for the Gospel. And though a proper obedience to the Law would have been a far more effectual introduction to Christianity, yet these indirect results must be admitted to be of considerable importance.

We might now consider the formation of the character here described as introductory to Christianity, not only as a requisite for its reception, but also as a means of its promulgation. For at first it was chiefly through the medium of the Jews and proselytes that the Gospel was preached to the rest of the world. In each city of the Roman empire there existed a kind of nucleus of Jews, from whom might spread the knowledge of the truth, and which did contribute, and might have much more contributed to the diffusion of Christianity.

We might also consider the goodness of God, as displayed in the adaptation of the legal dispensation to the circumstances of the Jews, and to the general condition of the world. And a beautiful proof of moral design might be drawn from the gradual manner in which the Law tended to prepare the nature of man for the reception of the Gospel.

We might also enlarge upon the manner in which Christianity was facilitated in its progress, by being shewn to be the substance and antitype of the Law. For the reasoning of the Epistles of St. Paul not only refutes mistaken notions of the Law, but is also a direct argument for Christianity. But these considerations cannot now be discussed, and are not directly connected with the present inquiry. Enough also has been stated to shew in what manner the Law was introductory to the Gospel. The

Law, like the Baptist,^c prepared for Christ by inculcating repentance, and a belief on Him who should come. It displayed, on a large scale, that change of mind which in each individual is a requisite to justification. It convinced man of sin, and then led him to the foot of the cross. Man was ignorant of his own condition, of the character of God, and of the need of atonement. But, under the legal economy he was taught the sinfulness of his nature, and the necessity of redemption; and was thus brought to Him "by^d whom all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses."

^c Acts xix. 4.

^d Acts xiii. 39.



